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SUBJECT: MUMBAI MASALA JUL 16, 2008: GUJARATI MUSLIM COMMUNITY  
DEVELOPMENT, FEMALE BIRTHS INCREASE IN GUJARAT, AMARNATH SHRINE  
PROTESTS IN INDORE

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- Gujarat Liberal Muslim Leader Says that State's Muslims are Progressing Despite Neglect from State Government
- Gujarat reports an Increase in Female Births
- Amarnath Shrine Protests Turn Violent in Indore, Madhya Pradesh

Liberal Gujarat Muslim Leader Says that State's Muslims are  
Progressing Despite Neglect from the State Government

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12. (U) Dr. J.S. Bandukwala, the Gujarat president of PUCL, and an American-educated liberal Muslim leader, informed Congenoff during his visit to Vadodara, Gujarat that despite neglect from the state government of Gujarat, Muslims were on a positive trajectory in terms of development. Dr. Badukwala noted that though the press writes about Gujarati Muslims becoming more religious, it neglects to mention that they have also become more educated. He proudly pointed out that more Gujarati Muslims girls were becoming educated; this trend had reached the point where many Gujarati Muslim girls were having trouble finding Gujarati Muslims as well-educated as they are to marry.

13. (U) Dr. Bandukwala also mentioned that Gujarati Muslim-run businesses were benefiting from the overall development of the state's infrastructure. But he also added that, as Gujarati Muslims felt shut out from government jobs, more were turning to the private sector for work or starting their own businesses. He mentioned that Gujarati Muslims can be as entrepreneurial as the rest of Gujarati society. As a result, he believes a great unwritten story of post-2002 Gujarat was that Muslims are beginning to pull themselves up, a phenomenon that he encouraged and was proud to be part. He added, however, that if the government took some interest, then development could be easier and faster.

14. (U) He pointed out that the Juhapura township, a large prosperous Muslim area near Ahmedabad, took years to obtain a bank branch. He noted that after years of personal lobbying, the Bank of India finally opened a branch there six months ago. However, he informed Congenoff that a large local bank called Dena Bank still refuses to branch there. Dr. Bandukwala stated

that these were the types of issues in which the Government of Gujarat should be helping but was not.

#### Gujarat Reports an Increase of Female Births

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15. (U) Reportedly, the state of Gujarat has shown a small but significant increase in the sex ratio at birth over the last year. In 2007, there were 846 girls per 1,000 boys, but this year the Civil Registration System, the body responsible for registration of births and deaths, reported there were 882 girls per 1,000 boys. According to press reports, the increases in child sex ratio are even evident in remote areas of Gujarat. The state government implemented a program to help prevent discovery of the child's sex prior to birth to avoid female feticide, which is a major problem in India (ref 2006 Delhi 930). Chief Minister Modi has made it a personal mission to educate Gujaratis about dangers of female feticide, and the reversal in the trend was cited by the state BJP in its December 2007 campaign platform as a major achievement. At the same time, NGOs carried out awareness campaigns with local media to help educate the population regarding the problems surrounding female feticide. Officials from the NGO Population First told Congenoffs that Gujaratis are responding to the government programs and awareness campaign because of the impact in their communities from child sex selection. Some communities have even taken vows not to abort females if they do discover the sex prior to delivery.

#### Amarnath Shrine Protests Turn Violent in Indore, Madhya Pradesh

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16. (U) On July 3, a nationwide protest called by the Hindu

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nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party and Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) turned violent in the city of Indore, the commercial capital of the central Indian state of Madhya Pradesh. The protesters were demonstrating against the decision by officials in the north Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir to revoke an order transferring land to Amarnath Shrine after bitter opposition in Muslim-majority Kashmir; Amarnath is a popular pilgrimage destination for Hindus from across India, and Indore is close to a major Hindu pilgrimage spot called Ujjain. In Indore, four people were killed by police gunfire, and three policemen were suspended for indiscriminate firing (Note: When quelling riots, police are required to aim to injure, not to kill).

17. (U) In the political atmosphere surrounding the nationwide protests about the Amarnath land decision, Hindu nationalist agitators wanted Muslims to close down shops because an undeclared general strike was in progress. In Muslim majority areas, residents/shop-keepers resisted the pressure from hardline Hindus groups, which led to altercations.

18. (U) Large parts of Indore were under curfew on July 4th, 5th. On July 6th, the curfew in the riot-hit areas was relaxed for two hours to allow women only to come out of their houses to buy essential items. The curfew ended on July 7 and the situation returned to normal. Meanwhile, the state's largest opposition party, the Congress Party, called for a judicial inquiry into the riots. The party protested on the streets of Bhopal, the state capital, and also during the ongoing monsoon session of the state parliament, by encircling Speaker Ishwar Das Rohani's podium. The speaker was forced to adjourn the House indefinitely (Note: The session was scheduled to end July 11th).

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